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February 2, 2009

Chairman, Co-chairman and Members
Environment Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 3200
Hartford, CT 06106

RE: (1) H.B. No. 5466, AN ACT CONCERNING THE RECYCLING OF PLASTIC SHOPPING BAGS AT RETAIL ESTABLISHMENTS
(2) H.B. No. 5466, AN ACT CONCERNING THE RECYCLING OF PLASTIC SHOPPING BAGS AT RETAIL ESTABLISHMENTS
(3) H.B. No. 5492, AN ACT CONCERNING THE RECYCLING OF PLASTIC SHOPPING BAGS
(4) H.B. 5207, AN ACT IMPOSING A TAX ON PAPER AND PLASTIC BAGS
(5) H.B. 5215, AN ACT IMPOSING A FIVE-CENT FEE ON PLASTIC SHOPPING BAGS PROVIDED BY RETAIL STORES

Dear Chairman, Co-chairman and Members:

I offer special thanks to the Environment Committee for conducting this hearing on the proposed bills.

The general purpose of Title 22a, Environmental Protection, is to minimize the reasonable likelihood of unreasonable environmental harm by consideration of feasible and prudent alternatives. Therefore, I urge passage of a bill combining the referenced bills, which would require recycling by retail establishments; charging of a graduated fee schedule over 3 years leading finally to a ban on plastic bags; and establishment of a special dedicated fund derived from the fees for environmental programs.

Recommendations

I RECOMMEND THAT THE BILL INCLUDE ALL BIODEGRADABLE BAGS SUCH AS PAPER AND PHASING OUT OF BOTH RETAIL BAGS OVER A THREE (3) YEAR TRANSITION PERIOD. In the first year after passage of the bill, consumers would pay a bag fee of \$0.50 per bag at the checkout counter, which would go towards the Long Island Sound Fund or similar environmental account. In the second year, the fee would increase to \$1.00 per bag, and **BANNED COMPLETELY IN THE THIRD YEAR.** Consumers would have the choice to bring their own bags, which BJ's now requires or use disposed cartons at retail establishments.

After March 1, 2008, Whole Foods, Inc. no longer provides plastic bags at its checkout counters. China has become the latest country to ban plastic bags.

Background

Plastic and paper shopping bags comprise the most ubiquitous consumer items on Earth. Their cheapness, usefulness, and plenty, and for plastic bags, their water resistance make them so convenient for carrying groceries, clothing, and other routine purchases and make them so hard to imagine life without them. Weighing just a few grams and averaging a few millimeters in thickness, plastic bags might seem thoroughly innocuous—were it not for the sheer number produced. Factories around the world churned out a whopping 4-5 trillion of them in 2002, ranging from large trash bags to thick shopping totes to flimsy grocery sacks.

In 1972, the Club of Rome shocked the world with a study titled *The Limits To Growth*. Two main conclusions were reached by this study. The first suggests that if economic-development continues at its current pace, society will shortly run out of nonrenewable resources with the most probable result being “a rather sudden and uncontrollable decline in both population and industrial capacity.” The second conclusion forecasts that piecemeal approaches to solving individual problems will not be successful.

Consider the cumulative energy in equivalent barrels of oil that society needs to make plastic or paper bags, which are then eventually disposed throughout the environment including landfills. Embodied (accumulated) energy is the total quantity of energy required to manufacture, and supply to the point of use, a product, material or service and disposal. It includes the energy expended from cradle to grave for: extracting raw materials; transporting, manufacturing, assembling and installing a specific material to produce a service or product and finally its disassembly, deconstruction and/or decomposition.

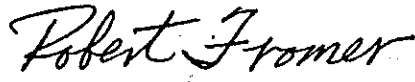
The recycling protocol that was embodied in the sustainability clause (Agenda 21) at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit gives priority to the preservation of energy content when using resources. Reduction of global warming today permits future generations to cope with the considerable financial burden of minimizing the effects of climate change. If this Committee remains serious about reducing the carbon footprint of its citizens, then eliminating such bags will go a long way to remediating the problem. **Removing things from the public’s hand provides the most effective and efficient preventive pollution remedy.**

It takes fossil-fuel energy to use, reuse, recycle or dispose of plastic and paper bags, which are nonessential to human existence and survival - it is an exceptionally wasteful convenience and a major component to the Culture of Waste. Irrespective of the misleading data, contrived information and misleading statistics from lobbyists and plastic and paper industry representatives, they cannot alter the irrefutable fact that it takes fossil fuels to make, manufacture and distribute such nonessential products. **THROWING AWAY OR RECYCLING SUCH BAGS IS THROWING AWAY TOMORROW’S FOSSIL FUELS!!!!!!**. But, until plastic bags are

removed from the economy, recycling provides the best practical alternative to other solid waste remediation methods.

Since many retail box establishments charge \$0.99 for bags produced using PET fiber, a \$0.05 per bag fee means that as a disincentive, a person would need to purchase 20 plastic bags to equal the cost of one store bought bag. While a \$0.50 fee means a person needs to purchase two plastic bags for each store bag for it to become a greater disincentive to continue a poor habit.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robert Fromer".

Robert Fromer
Environmental Consultant